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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses issues involved in teaching culturally diverse students and questions current practices in multicultural teacher education. The central portion of the paper describes and discusses an alternative approach to multicultural teacher education through the Teachers for Alaska program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Teachers for Alaska (TFA) is a fifth-year certification program for secondary teachers which emphasizes preparation for very small high schools in remote Eskimo and Indian villages. Built around the idea that teacher education should help beginning teachers to learn experientially about their students and those students' families, the curriculum of this 10-month program is comprised of 6 tightly integrated blocks. Each block begins and ends with significant experiences in culturally diverse classrooms. An important activity in each block is the discussion of a teaching case study. The final block includes student teaching and a concluding seminar. The paper concludes by exploring ways to improve this specific program and multicultural teacher education in general. Thirty-six references are listed. (IAH)

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Preparing Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms: A Case Study in Rural Alaska

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, April 3–7, 1991

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Preparing Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms: A Case Study in Rural Alaska

In a mere ten years, fully one-third of all public school pupils will be students of color, according to the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life (see Banks, 1989b). Indeed, the current school enrollment picture reveals that in 23 of the nation's 25 largest cities, youngsters of color constitute the majority of students. Further, the already small percentage of minority teachers is also decreasing alarmingly. Increasingly, then, majority-culture teachers will be called upon to teach groups of so-called minority-culture students. For example, inner city schools with a preponderance of African-American or Hispanic students will increasingly depend on Anglo-American teachers.

A related phenomenon occurs in states like Alaska which have significant minority student populations. In Alaska, the numbers of Eskimo and Indian teachers are few, and the state maintains small schools in numerous isolated Alaska Native villages. So, while the state and its universities are attempting to increase the number of certified teachers who are Alaska Native, the current situation still requires that many teaching positions be filled with white, middle-class teachers, only some of whom are from Alaska. Even teachers from Alaska may be unfamiliar with Eskimo and Indian cultures within the state or the issues and concerns that teaching in cross-cultural or multicultural classrooms raises.

We begin this paper by laying out in broad strokes issues involved in teaching culturally diverse students and by questioning current practices in multicultural teacher education. The second and central portion of the paper describes and discusses an alternative approach to multicultural teacher education through the Teachers for Alaska program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Teachers for Alaska (TFA) is a fifth year certification program for secondary teachers which emphasizes preparation for very small high schools in remote Eskimo and Indian villages. We conclude by exploring ways to improve this specific program and multicultural teacher education at large.

An Intercultural Dilemma

When a teacher shares a culture with her students, small clues—such as student comments and questions—reveal to her a set of features about the student or a situation that she recognizes because she understands the nuances of context in students' behavior. However, classrooms in which teachers and students differ culturally pose an "intercultural dilemma" (Stiegelbauer, 1986). Teachers who are culturally different[1,2] from their students are unable to make a "presumption of shared identity" (Jackson, 1986) as a basis for determining what should be taught, interpreting classroom situations and students' behavior, or making pedagogical

decisions. That is, multicultural classroom situations potentially raise taken-for-granted teaching tasks to greater consciousness for teachers of culturally diverse students since those primarily white middle-class teachers cannot reliably draw upon assumptions about their students to guide their teaching (Paley, 1979).Thus, the teachers most in need of knowledge about their students are those teachers who are forced—by virtue of differences between themselves and their students—to take account of their students' uniqueness. Following this line, a knowledge of students is truly a kind of knowledge about teaching per se, knowledge that does not derive from common sense or knowledge of subject matter (Jackson, 1986).

Obligations inherent in a teacher's role require her to help students learn—to mediate subject matter in meaningful ways in interaction with students—with the goal of achieving equal learning opportunities for diverse students. Teachers who have little sense of who their students are—students' backgrounds and experiences, perspectives, and values—face difficult challenges with real import in terms of student learning. For instance, a white middle-class teacher may have to think hard about ways to help her Alaska Native students comprehend the concept "manifest destiny" in U.S. history. Other teachers may not recognize the capabilities of students who are culturally different from themselves to learn certain subject matter and skills. They may lack faith in those students' abilities to succeed

academically or they may want to shelter certain students from failure.

There a moral imperative to provide equal learning opportunities to all groups of students, but the empirical evidence gives reason to worry about teachers' thinking and behavior in facilitating such opportunities. For example, student teachers can fail in working with youngsters who are culturally different from themselves (Kleifgen, 1988). They either do not possess or neglect to draw upon their sociocultural, cognitive, and experiential knowledge of students. Further, the quality of teaching provided by practicing teachers for working-class students in a multicultural junior high school in a city setting studied by Grant and Sleeter (1986) also raises questions. These researchers assert that the teachers they observed formulated expectations for their students on the basis of their perceptions of students' academic abilities and home backgrounds. Their study supports the existence of linkages between teachers' views of students, their expectations of them, their goals for students, and their ideas about how to teach them.

Increasing Prospective Teachers' Knowledge of Cultural Diversity

If teaching demands a special knowledge about students and if a primary obligation of being a teacher (and a goal of multicultural

education) is to create learning environments so that students from diverse groups will experience an equal opportunity to learn from school, then teacher education is faced with a significant question: What programmatic approaches might preservice teacher education take to develop teacher candidates' capacities—their knowledge, skills and attitudes—to work effectively with culturally diverse students?

One common response adds multicultural courses to the curriculum of teacher preparation efforts at both the preservice and inservice levels (McDiarmid, 1989; McDiarmid, 1990; McDiarmid & Price, 1990). Such program additions are typically designed to encourage commitment to multicultural education and to provide increased information about culturally diverse students. For example, both the Los Angeles Unified School District's Teacher Trainee Program and the Accepting Behaviors for Cultural Diversity for Teachers Project at the Michigan Department of Education focus on dispositions needed for good multicultural teaching, information on specific groups, and specific pedagogical techniques (McDiarmid, 1990; McDiarmid & Price, 1990).

Such a programmatic approach would seem to be consistent with Gay's (1986) criteria for the adequate preparation of teachers in multicultural 1) theory and 2) philosophy, 3) substantive content about cultural characteristics and sociopolitical experiences of different ethnic groups, and 4) multicultural pedagogy. Recent texts

for use in multicultural courses (e.g., Banks, 1984; Banks and Banks, 1989; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Hernandez, 1989) also reflect this set of criteria.

However, this approach to increasing prospective teachers' multicultural knowledge, skills and attitudes is insufficient, ineffective, and potentially misleading—even damaging. Courses that concentrate on giving teachers more knowledge about different cultural groups do not appear to improve those teachers' abilities to connect subject matter to diverse students (National Center for Research on Teacher Education, n.d.). McDiarmid (1990) concludes that

> the connection between . . . teachers' knowledge of the historical and cultural background of learners and teachers' capacity to assist culturally different children develop meaningful understandings of subject matter is . . . speculative and tenuous (p. 17).

Further, this approach does not—as a matter of course—lead to teacher candidates' increased rejection of stereotypes (McDiarmid, 1990; McDiarmid & Price, 1990). It may even confuse novice teachers who are already disposed toward multicultural goals (McDiarmid, 1990). In explanation, McDiarmid (1990) suggests a tension between the need to use generalizations to describe groups and the purposes of multicultural education to expose and eliminate the prejudgment of pupils based on their membership in a particular group. At its worst,

this kind of approach to multicultural teacher education may actually contribute to prospective teachers' overgeneralizing and stereotyping of diverse groups of students (Cazden & Mehan, 1989; Delpit 1988; McDiarmid, 1990; McDiarmid & Price, 1990).

Preparing Teachers for Rural Alaska

Like other programs with multicultural aims, the Teachers for Alaska (TFA) program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks offers its prospective secondary teachers related theory, philosophy, substantive knowledge and pedagogical strategies, especially in relation to Alaska's various Indian and Eskimo populations. For instance, prospective teachers in TFA learn theories of sociolinguistics and research on communication patterns; information on the history and culture of Alaska's Indian and Eskimo groups, subsistence lifestyles, and political issues affecting Alaska's Natives; and teaching strategies such as cooperative grouping. These topics are discussed in the context of providing equal learning opportunities for all students.

However, the Teachers for Alaska program has not included a required course on multicultural education as a means of helping our prospective teachers learn about teaching culturally diverse students. The Teachers for Alaska program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks has taken a different tack on the situation. As an

an alternative to generic, decontextualized learning about diverse students typical of most multicultural teacher education programs, we have linked our program to the contexts in which our students will work (National Center for Research on Teacher Education, n.d.) Moreover, we weave consideration of multicultural contexts and concerns throughout the program.

Thus, we have taken an unusual stance toward multicultural teacher education, a stance which focuses our prospective teachers on learning about teaching culturally diverse pupils in a particular context. This approach also helps prospective teachers learn how to learn from the culturally diverse students and communities with which they work. Central to our approach is Donald Schon's (1983, 1987) notion of "reflection-in-action" as the essence of professional activity.

In this section, we first briefly describe the contexts on which our program focuses. Then, we discuss our thinking about what the concept of reflection means in preparation for teaching in multicultural contexts and our experience with "reflective inquiry" as our organizing framework. In the process, we describe the goals, organization, and curriculum of Teachers for Alaska and present evaluation data from the program. In the following paragraphs, we draw heavily on previous analyses of the TFA program (Kleinfeld, in press; Kleinfeld & Noordhoff, 1988; Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1990).

The Context of Teaching in Rural Alaska

The Teachers for Alaska (TFA) program is a fifth-year certification program designed to prepare high quality secondary school teachers. It serves both Native and non-Native prospective teachers. The program emphasizes the preparation of teachers for very small high schools in remote Eskimo and Indian villages, schools which present dilemmas similar to those in inner city schools. These schools confront teachers with a myriad of contextual considerations—ranging from students' individual personalities and cultural and linguistic backgrounds to multigrade and multisubject classroom groupings, remoteness and isolation of the schools, and community economic, social and political organization. The program also prepares teachers for larger, more urban, high schools serving multicultural populations.

Preparation for effective teaching in such settings means much more than learning to apply technical, research-based knowledge to a culturally diverse classroom. Schon (1983, 1987) has labeled such an approach, in which professional problems are seen as givens and are solved by the application of formal research findings, as "technical rationality." Beyond taking for granted the problems different educational situations may present, as well as presuming educational ends and means, this "applications" view of knowledge does not prepare prospective teachers to weigh and

manage competing and conflicting goals, teaching dilemmas, and value commitments (Feiman-Nemser & Ball, 1984).

Rather, preparation for effective teaching in such settings means developing in prospective teachers a process of practical reflection enabling them to 1) understand contexts, 2) consider educational goals and 3) make instructional decisions to fit perceived contexts and appropriate goals.

It means developing the capacity for what Kennedy (1987) calls "deliberate action," which integrates the capacity to recognize multiple ways of interpreting situations with action (Feiman-Nemser, 1989). It means including in the subject matter of reflection social, political, and ethical issues which are embedded in teachers' thinking and everyday practice, as well as reflection on teaching performance.

Conceptualizing Reflective Inquiry for Multicultural Teacher Education

We chose the conceptual focus of reflective inquiry as a way of communicating to our students that there are no simple recipes for teaching, especially in multicultural classrooms and changing communities. However, the language of reflective inquiry has not proved to be as rich a heuristic device as we had hoped. Commonsense connotations of the term "reflection" make it vague and ambiguous. And, for both teacher education students and K–12

practitioners, the term reinforces the discontinuity between formal coursework at the university and learning about teaching from classroom experience; that is, it connotes something university professors have time for, but teachers "in the trenches" do not.

Thus, we have reoriented the conceptual framework of the Teachers for Alaska program around the concept of design as put forth by Schon (1983, 1987). Schon argues that professional practice is fundamentally concerned with the issue of design as a way of transforming present situations into preferred ones. The metaphor of design more adequately describes the nature of teaching while it also preserves the dynamics and values of reflective inquiry. We have adopted the idea and language of design as our operational definition of reflection. As a program designed to prepare reflective and effective teachers to work with culturally diverse students, the Teachers for Alaska program attempts to develop teachers who can:

1. Identify crucial issues and dilemmas in ambiguous, complex teaching and community situations;

2. Think critically about the worthiness of alternative educational goals;

3. Select from a wide repertoire of teaching strategies, methods of subject matter representation, and images of fine teaching

enabling them to tailor instruction to culturally diverse students and to particular cultural contexts;

4. Identify the possible consequences and risks of alternative educational choices in cultural contexts and make ethical decisions; and

5. Learn from their own practice, especially from the culturally diverse students and communities with whom they work.

The Curriculum

The Teachers for Alaska (TFA) program requires prospective teachers to make a full-time commitment to their teacher preparation for an extended academic year (approximately 10 months). TFA has eliminated the traditional sequence of teacher education courses—disciplinary foundations, followed by methods, culminating with student teaching. Instead, our curriculum is predicated upon a particular set of assumptions about learning to teach in multicultural classrooms. First, we argue that experience with culturally diverse youngsters and the tasks of teaching are necessary before prospective teachers are able to make sense of the concepts, theories and methods that university coursework has to offer. Second, we hold that educational theory needs to be presented in terms of actual teaching problems and tasks. We turn on its head

the common practice of "putting theory into practice." By beginning with "problems of practice"[3] we provide a context for exploring educational theory, research, and students' experiences in schools. Third, we contend that teacher candidates need to learn how to pose educational problems as well as to deal with those problems. Fourth, we reason that teacher preparation should focus on the teaching of subjects to students of diverse backgrounds, not on the teaching of methods.

The program curriculum is built around six tightly integrated blocks, beginning and ending with significant experiences in culturally diverse classrooms. The first block provides our prospective teachers with concrete experiences in two settings—small high schools in Athabascan Indian communities and urban multicultural middle and high schools. These experiences stretch over a period of approximately six weeks. During much of this period, TFA students are apprenticed to a master teacher in his subject matter area for two periods a day. On-campus seminars—focusing on such issues as school culture, the interaction of language, culture and identity, and classroom organization—help frame students' fieldwork before, during, and after their experiences.

Blocks two through five are organized around the tasks, problems, and dilemmas of teaching language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in both mainstream multicultural and

minority cultural settings. Blocks vary from five to ten full days in length. In small high schools teachers typically teach outside their areas of subject matter preparation; so, we prepare teachers to teach across core academic areas. This phenomenon is also not uncommon in larger schools, although it does not occur with as much frequency.

An important activity in each block is the discussion of a teaching case-study. Each case embeds a complex, often difficult, classroom or community situation within larger economic, political, social, and cultural issues. For example, Malaise of the Spirit (Finley, 1988), considers racial tensions in an English classroom, the appropriateness of alternative goals and grading practices for culturally diverse students, and the community's relationship with the school and its faculty. Analyzing and discussing these cases, TFA students learn to spot and frame issues, consider alternative perspectives, and evaluate different courses of action. We find that case discussion not only provides our students with contextualized opportunities to practice reflective design, but it also helps prepare novice teachers emotionally to deal with ambiguous, value-laden multicultural conditions.

The final block of the program includes student teaching (approximately 12 weeks) and a concluding seminar. Most TFA student teachers arrange to teach in small rural communities. Accompanying student teaching is distance-delivered coursework

which helps student teachers develop their capacities to pose, interpret, and deal with problems of practice. TFA student teachers return to campus for a week-long concluding seminar to present a case study of their student teaching experiences.

Learning How to Learn from Culturally Diverse Students and Communities

Rather than teaching prospective teachers about specific cultural groups, teacher education should help beginning teachers learn how to learn experientially about their students and those students' families (Cazden & Mehan, 1989). Indeed, Murrell (1990) has argued that "it will be necessary to teach prospective teachers how to gain access to the ways of knowing, histories, and lives of the diverse communities they are preparing to enter" (p. 3). In fact, McDiarmid and his colleagues (1987) discovered that effective teachers in remote rural Alaskan schools serving Indian and Eskimo students were successful in taking account of relationships and events outside of school—that is, taking account of context in their teaching. They actively sought out information about their students. Although these teachers did collect information about their students' cultural heritage, they more often sought information about individual students. These teachers wanted to know about a particular pupil's family and social life, their out-of-school activities and interests. They also wanted to know about the present life of the

community, about key institutions such as the church, bingo night, and community basketball, about life-marking events such as births and deaths, about family feuds and alliances, all critical in shaping classroom instructional activities (McDiarmid, 1990).

In the Teachers for Alaska program, we are attempting to develop our prospective teachers' dispositions to find out about the context—including students and communities—and to use that information in teaching. The following examples of experiences and activities show how we go about this:

1. Visits to small high schools serving Indian communities. As mentioned earlier, TFA students spend a full week in small rural high schools early in the program. Because these small high schools are at some distance from campus, we live in the schools. During the school day, we help youngsters with their schoolwork and present prearranged lessons. After school hours, we visit with teachers, play basketball with school and community people and attend other community events, as well as participate in a regional school board meeting involving school district central office personnel and community representatives.

2. Guided observations in multicultural schools. Early in their field experiences, teacher candidates shadow a middle school student in a large urban school to get a feel for the student's interests, motivations, and perceptions about school life. This exercise also helps prospective teachers realize youngsters' underground

competencies rather than merely attending to students' adolescent performance and behavior. We also ask our novice teachers to observe students in non-classroom spaces at a mainstream high school. This exercise usually leads to seminar discussions about ethnic groupings and perceived racial tensions.

3. Requirements accompanying student teaching. Coursework helps TFA student teachers learn about their students and the community in which they work. For example, one course exercise has student teachers draw a map of the village, coding it by kinship ties, key institutions (e.g., the church, store, post office). Very often, student teachers will ask the help of their students in the making of this map. In another exercise, student teachers ask their pupils what they think they might do after high school, and research the local economy. In their journals and reflections on their own videotaped lessons, TFA student teachers identify and analyze contextual factors that will help them interpret the situation. For example, student teachers will often write about coming to understand certain puzzling students through observing their behavior in and out of school, finding out more about their family, and so forth.

4. Involvement in the community. Like the effective rural Alaska teachers in McDiarmid's (1988) study, we encourage our teacher candidates to put themselves in roles outside the classroom (e.g., community basketball, skin-sewing or beading groups, church

attendance) and to spend time in places such as the store or post office where people are likely to congregate and share news. We advise our students to seek out the expertise of teacher's aides who live in the community and to make home visits, as appropriate, and to stop for tea. We use cases and portraits of effective teachers which describe ways to make connections with students and parents outside the classroom (e.g., Shulman, in press; McDiarmid, 1988). In fact, many of our student teachers volunteer to lead extracurricular activities which bring them into closer personal relationship with their students outside the classroom. For example, they may volunteer to coach a cross-country ski team involving overnight travel to other villages in the region, or they may start a photography club.

5. Student teaching case studies. At the conclusion of the program, each student teacher presents a written and oral case study to the cohort. In this case study, the student teacher frames the central problems he or she has dealt with in a particular school setting, with particular students in a particular community. After describing and analyzing the central events and issues, the student teacher concludes with a set of lessons and questions emerging from his or her experiences.

Each of these experiences and activities is designed to help prospective teachers learn how to learn from the contexts in which they are working. We attempt to set up occasions—in the form of exercises and other program expectations—that will encourage TFA

students to interact with, reflect on, and learn from the culturally diverse students and communities which they encounter.

Evaluation

The second day of the Teachers for Alaska program, Tom Jamison[4] and the rest of his cohort were asked to teach a 10-minute lesson, something he thought would be appropriate for Eskimo or Indian students in a small village high school, to be videotaped. Tom chose to teach a lesson on the food chain. As his lesson began, he sat down on a table with a large paper pad in his lap and began to draw a diagram of the food chain. Tom proceeded to lecture in a disjointed and convoluted manner for the 10 minutes, at one point making reference to a McDonald's three-quarter pounder hamburger as a source of energy. Tom had nothing to say about how he might improve the lesson nor any issues he wanted to reflect on.

When Tom videotaped his 10-minute lesson at the end of the Teachers for Alaska program, he walked confidently to the blackboard and drew a diagram of a village steam bath. Getting together for a steam is an important social and political event in many Eskimo communities. On this occasion, Tom referred to the assignment he had given his students the night before: "Your assignment was to go into and take a steam bath, and I wanted you to make as many observations as possible about what the state of water was at various times according to the temperature . . . ." Through

dialogue with the students about their observations, Tom elicited concepts about condensation and evaporation. In our follow-up questions, he talked about teaching these scientific concepts in a way that students could understand. He then discussed how both western scientists and Native Alaskans predicted the weather (Kleinfeld & Noordhoff, 1988).

The results of a study of videotaped "reflective teaching samples" by TFA's first two student cohorts indicate substantial growth in our prospective teachers' reflective orientations toward and their teaching of culturally diverse students (see Table 1). (See Kleinfeld & Noordhoff, 1989, for a complete description of the measure, coding system, and methodology.) We asked students to plan and teach a 10-minute lesson appropriate to either a multicultural mainstream or a minority setting. Afterwards, we asked our students why they chose the lesson, what they thought about in planning the lesson and what they might do differently if they taught it again. We asked students to do teaching samples at the beginning of the program, after the campus-based semester and at the end of the program, after student teaching.

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Most dramatic was the shift in teacher candidates' concept of teaching and its fundamental problems. At first, they conceived of teaching as telling and their main problem as squeezing large amounts of information into a short period of time. By the end of the program, they conceived of teaching as engaging students with the subject matter. Our teacher candidates also showed gains in their dispositions and abilities to take into account their culturally different students' background knowledge and frames of reference, communication styles, and vocabulary. Further, they increased in their efforts to reflect on instructional goals and to draw on research knowledge.

Interestingly, gains made in the areas of relating subject matter to students' backgrounds and frames of reference—like Tom Jamison ably accomplished in the second vignette above—are comparable to the views of minority students on what constitutes effective teaching (Murrell, 1990). These minority students saw effective teaching as making connections. In part, they thought teachers should relate subject matter to their students' lives, cultures and the prior experiences pupils brought to the classroom. In dramatic contrast, the nonminority teachers Murrell surveyed described teaching effectiveness in terms of classroom management.

TFA teacher candidates showed growth on all measures after the first semester, as well as at the end of student teaching. Thus, we

have some confidence that these changes were not merely the result of a powerful student teaching experience.

In sum, the approach taken by the Teachers for Alaska program toward preparing teachers for culturally diverse settings emphasizes learning to think like a teacher, when thinking like a teacher means using—to borrow Buchmann's (1990) phrase—"careful vision" to "see" and interpret multicultural situations, when thinking like a teacher means being able to critically evaluate educational purposes and strategies against the goals of providing equal access to subject matter learning opportunities for diverse students. We are attempting to prepare secondary teachers who are flexible decision-makers, imaginative inventors of educational programs, and most of all, who are—as teachers—learners themselves.

Turning Reflection Inside, Examining Knowledge and Beliefs

The Teachers for Alaska program, then, is designed, as McDiarmid and Price (1990) suggest, to help prospective teachers

> develop their capacity to reason about teaching: consider thoughtfully their learners, the subject matter, the learning process, and the moral and political context in deciding what and how their pupils should learn (p. 18).

We strive to develop in our prospective teachers not only cultural sensitivity, but also a broad sensitivity to contexts. Yet, while the program focuses on reflection about context and the teacher's role in context, we find ourselves wondering whether we have encouraged adequate self-reflection by our teacher candidates.

Perhaps a missing piece in the Teachers for Alaska program and multicultural teacher education, generally, is the examination by prospective teachers and teacher educators of teacher candidates' entering views and beliefs about culturally diverse students, teaching and learning, and the educational process (McDiarmid, 1990; National Center for Research on Teacher Education, n.d.). Moreover, prospective teachers need to examine their personal histories and educational biographies for clues to the ways their experiences—when unexamined—are likely to limit their effectiveness in educating poor and minority students (Britzman, 1986; King & Ladson-Billings, 1990). In this vein, King and Ladson-Billings, teaching at Santa Clara University, offer several concrete and productive strategies, in part drawing on Bennett's (1990) recent text.[5]

We are coming to understand that learners—including prospective teachers—encounter new information through the lenses of their prior knowledge and existing belief systems. We have seen that viewing teacher learning as an additive process, represented by the appending of multicultural courses or units of information about

culturally diverse students to existing courses, is by itself unproductive. Rather, viewing teacher learning as a process of conceptual change requires understanding teacher candidates' background knowledge—for example, their views about culturally diverse learners—as the starting place of teacher education.

Paine's (1990) report on prospective teachers' orientations toward diversity, based on data from the National Center for Research on Teacher Education's study of Teacher Education and Learning to Teach (TELT), provides one beginning. These prospective teachers maintained an inherently conservative, individualistic, and decontextualized orientation toward diversity, colored by a strong emphasis on psychological explanations, motivation, and personality.

Other research on which this paper has been based (e.g., that by McDiarmid and his colleagues) has foreshadowed a line of inquiry soon to begin at the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning. In part, this research focuses on how teachers learn about diverse learners and how the pedagogy of selected teacher education programs influences teachers' understanding of the role of cultural difference in teaching and learning. In addition, a study currently underway at the University of Alaska Fairbanks traces prospective secondary teachers' ideas about teaching United States history to students who are culturally different from themselves over the course of their final year of professional preparation (Noordhoff,

1990). Part of this study investigates secondary teacher candidates' knowledge and beliefs about Alaska Native students.

We urge the teacher education community to continue the investigation of preservice teachers' entering knowledge and beliefs. From this basis we can hope to bring about appropriate change in prospective teachers' thinking about multicultural education. Perhaps, too, by making teacher candidates' prior knowledge and personal backgrounds a legitimate part of the conversation in university classrooms, these novices will also be encouraged to do the same for their own pupils in public schools.

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Notes

[1] In this paper, we use "culturally different," "cultural differences" and "cultural diversity" to refer to a broad spectrum of differences, including differing views on appropriate social behavior, differences in values and beliefs, attitudes and world-views, and differences in everyday practices and traditions, as well as to reference teachers' and students' differing background experiences. Such cultural differences include, for purposes of this paper, differences in social class and language, as well as ethnicity.

[2] The question of cultural differences between teachers and their students is a relative one, however. Teachers are more and less like their students. For example, Alaska Native teachers would seem to be more like their Eskimo or Indian students than would be white, middle-class teachers. But Eskimo teachers would be less like their Indian students than Indian teachers would be. Even Yup'ik Eskimo teachers would be faced with some cultural differences in teaching Inupiaq Eskimo students.

[3] Note that we do not use the term "problems" negatively in relation to practice. We use the term in a general sense to refer to such matters as puzzling situations, challenging issues, dilemmas, and teachers' everyday teaching concerns. It is especially important to understand that the term carries no valence in the context of discussing multicultural education.

[4] Tom Jamison is a pseudonym.

[5] Interestingly, King and Ladson-Billings (1990) have integrated aspects of more traditional multicultural courses with exercises that urge self-reflection on entering beliefs into a course entitled, "Introduction to Teaching in a Multicultural Society."

Table 1

Development of Teachers for Alaska Students' Reflective Teaching Samples: Beginning to End of Program

Characteristics of Student Teacher Thinking	Time Interval		
	Percentage at Start of Program (September)	*Percentage after 1st University Semester* (December)	*Percentage after Student Teaching Semester* (May)
• Emphasizes active student learning rather than teacher telling	12%	50%	92%
• Reflects on instructional goals	21	67	92
• Takes into account culturally different students'			
—background knowledge and frame of reference	28	62	83
—communication styles	4	39	67
—vocabulary	12	31	46
• Research knowledge informs instruction	17	92	100

Note: N=24

Source: Teachers for Rural Alaska Program Assessment Report. Final Report to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, 1988.